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ARCHITECTURE TEXTS

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The popular proverb “Plus ça change, plus c’est la même chose” (“The more things change, the more they remain the same”) is attributed to French journalist and writer Jean-Baptiste Alphonse Karr. Although it is used in a pessimistic sense, we could push it towards a different and positive understanding where the integrity of those ‘things’ are not jeopardized by the possible changes affecting them.

Roland Barthes’ famous metaphor about the Argonauts and their ship Argo might help understand our new approach: during the long journey commanded by the gods, the Argonauts change and repair several deteriorated ship elements, so they reach port with the same ship but at the same time is totally different, without changing neither its shape nor its name. Barthes will state that “the ship Argo is very useful for us since it provides us with the allegory of an eminently structural object, created not by genius, inspiration, commitment, or evolution, but by two humble actions (foreign to any sort of creation mystic): substitution (one part replaces the other, like a creative paradigm) and nomination (name is absolutely disassociated to the stability of the parts): after a number of combinations on the inside of one name, there is nothing left from the original: Argo is an object which its only cause is its name, its only identity its shape”.

This will let us illustrate the surprising pace at which academic magazines appear in Spain. We could query about the motives behind this, but we do not aim to delve on this debate affecting, among other things, the availability of digital publishing, the pressure to publish in the university realm, the waiting lists and filters of some of the better situated magazines, etc. However the abundance of publication implies an abundance of article and that we wish to comment on.

We must accept that theory, critique, history, thought, a conversation, or a simple remark on architecture on text have different approaches, each one with its peculiarities and its own efficiency. This is also true to the academic genre, with certain exceptions. Architecture critique and analysis has, in fact, its own codes (or it should have), as much as the thesis, the article, the review, the essay, or the academic manual has its own.

We could also argue, whether the writing on architecture, according to the existing tradition, should be more or less comprehensive or cumulative, whether it should be theoretical, critical or functional, or even poetic. We might recall, as example, the controversy aroused by Enric Miralles’ thesis. The famous occasion has been described in detail by Rafael Moneo, president of the jury. It starts with the starting refusal of an “intimate and personal essay” with “appealing and carefully chosen images” but far from “convention”, understanding than beyond the academic format, a thesis should “stretch the disciplinary knowledge of architecture”. The second presentation, closer to the academic norm, widely acknowledged the expectations, although the content was not too different to the first, consisting of two small notebooks, one with 31 typed pages and another one with 68 pages with images.

Apart from exceptions and strokes of genius, we must indeed remember that every type of text has certain characteristics and their goal, even more important, an objective reader and a publication which usually has its interests and priorities. And, recalling the french proverb, although the realm has certainly changed, things are still similar –even the same– and we should avoid the confusion of written genres, the readers they aim at, and the aforementioned publications.

This is truly relevant for allegedly academic architecture magazines which appeal and host these sort of texts. It is pointless to try and unveil all the reasons for the confusion that often affects them, although we might point at some of them. It might come from the scarce amount of these sort of publications up until recent days, against the large tradition on writings about architecture. Perhaps we could add the special trait of architecture, tilting from the humanistic to the technical, from the different rhetoric means that have bestowed through history; that is, the classical kinship between the scientific-article and the essay-article. While the first one allows for few hesitations, since it usually deploys a neutral and fairly conventional structure and language, the essay allows greater literary freedoms and usually has rather subjective, speculative, and open connotations. That is why it has been lately preferred, on top of being defended as an unavoidable genre by many hosted in modernity’s thinking manner. The solution would obviously be to combine the ‘scientific’ approach relying on rigor, verification, confrontation and the convincing proof of arguments, without giving up the characteristic essay aspiration for style and lucubration. One should not quarrel with the other.

In short, we should summarize the demands, eventually, affecting the interests and priorities for articles in *Ra*, *Revista de Arquitectura*. Their topic, indeed, has to be framed in the analysis, theory, history, and critique of contemporary architecture, in a broad sense. Through rested and selective analysis that produce hypothesis framed with rigor and discuss possible conclusions. We have to place the debate where it stood last time somebody approach the issue and reach a discussion level suitable for the scientific community’s avantgarde.

Somehow, depositions to *Ra*, *Revista de Arquitectura* have to be based on a truthful investigation, with the undeniable contribution of new information that will enrich the general knowledge on a certain topic. All this requires basic contextualization of the discourse through bibliography, quotes and references, without thoroughness aspirations, but with the necessary ambition to insure its credibility.

We must maximize attention and rigor regarding originality, furthermore when regards the work of great masters or well-known authors, setting aside the recurrence of common place, personal views, the personal or prototypical interpretation attempts, school essay, academic lectures or thematic approach, or more or less conventional approaches to known issues, even when, according to our statement, all have their place, precise context and utility.

It is convenient to weigh the relevance of merely interpretative essays, witty, or merely opinion based, without a decisive contribution of new data nor enough perspective nor historical distance: somehow, these sort of texts, would only be interesting when written by acknowledged authors.

Lastly, we must be certain of the relevance of the issues and, at the same time, avoid those that are too peculiar, local, or too specific and, finally, not so able of arousing the interest of the whole audience: scholars and researchers from the academic community.

In short, all this specifications, share a given priority that do not cancel out many others of great interest, skill, or credibility within the ever increasing scope of the architectural publication, also the academic. Therefore, *plus ça change, plus c’est la même chose...*

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HISTORY AND PROJECT: COLLECTIVE HOUSING FROM THE 20S AND 30S

Luca Ortelli

In 2008 six Berlin *Siedlungen* were declared World Heritage by the UNESCO. It has been a singular case and most likely unique. Protecting thereby a few examples out of the number of architectural quality social housing from the 20s and 30s. This, however, implies a theoretical and historiographical problem that we could not diminish by restraining it to the real of architectural restoration or refurbishment. These dwellings, a valuable and substantial part of the city, can be considered objects in space or witnesses to history. Anyhow, these buildings are extremely fragile. The article answers questions such as: Does architectural culture have the theoretical and practical tools to confront these situations? What critical stands and commitments should we take for their conservation?

THE MINIMUM, THE ESSENTIAL IN THE WORK OF ARNE JACOBSEN

Félix Solaguren-Beascoa

After the Second World War, the world of Architecture began to systematically use the resources produced by industry. The military circumstances exploited their possibilities to subsequently use them as a challenge for the future. The experimentation with new techniques, serial production and, what is more important, the productive systematization fomented the emergence and use of new materials in the construction world, which allowed its aesthetic and design evolution.

An interesting example is to analyze the development of the structure-facade relationship in tall buildings due to the resources offered by industry. First being the same element to later on be segregated into two clearly differentiated ones.

Nevertheless, their coexistence in a different type of relationship would be necessary once more in order to achieve the genuine open floor plan.

On a smaller scale, we find that relationship between project and industry in the “Case Study Houses” on the west coast of the United States, or in the no longer

existing house that Gordon Bunshaft built for himself in 1963 in East Hampton, New York.

Arne Jacobsen also became, since the mid-fifties of the last century, a staunch defender of the prefabricated systems offered by Danish industry and he used them in different projects. The military industry also turned out to be a booster in the field of design. Plywood was used for the first time in the middle of the XIXth century as a specific element of construction. Subsequently, taking advantage of its bending quality, it was used in furniture and household objects. Later on, and with the application of heat, it was moulded. This experience was definitely formalized after the world conflict and applied to a new type of seat. In 1952 Arne Jacobsen used it in the design of the “ant” chair, lowering costs and adapting it to mass production. It was the minimum object, the essential: only muscle and bones.

SPANISH ARCHITECTURE UNDER FRANCO REGIME'S SECOND ERA AND THE BOLETÍN DE LA DIRECCIÓN GENERAL DE ARQUITECTURA (1946-1957)

Víctor Pérez Escolano

Spanish architecture responds to the geo-strategic recomposition process after the II World War. In the fifties, after autarchy, it focused on economic development and the cultural and technological transformation. The *Boletín Informativo de la Dirección General de Arquitectura* portrays the events of architectural renovation, its modernization and internationalization up to 1957. To examine the architecture produced under Franco regime's second era we must understand the discourse produced at the time, the assimilation of architecture with the artistic innovation, the acknowledgment of outstanding international milestones, and the most powerful architectural works uniquely exemplified through architectural production. This article continues the one published at this magazine's previous issue: *Arquitectura y política en España a través del Boletín de la Dirección General de Arquitectura (1946-1957)*, Ra. *Revista de Arquitectura*, 15, 2013, pp. 35-46.

MODIFIED CRONOLOGY AS A DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES

Pablo López Martín

In 1926 a young Marcel Breuer carries out a poster entitled “A film of the Bauhaus, and adds as subtitle “For five years”, which sums up his furniture production during his statement at the school upto date. The poster simulates to be a tape roll film where, as frames of a movie, he places his most prominent seat models. The poster concludes with a non created yet model: at the last frame appears a woman literally sitted on air with an enigmatic text that says “Every year is improved and at the end you sit on columns of air”.

The poster, which apparently simulates a compilation document, it is, however, the expression of an aspiration, a personal program that charts the way forward in Breuer's career. Two facts allow us to support this claim. The first is the way the sequence of chairs is closed, a statement of intent about the next targets for Breuer. The search of structural and visual lightness and its expression will become an obsession for him throughout his career and jump on the scale of the furniture manufacturer to the architectural scale. The second finding is the order in which Breuer placed their models is not real. Details of his own biography and graphical documentation found at the digital archive at the University of Syracuse in New York allow us to affirm it. But it is precisely in its falsehood where it takes root all interest since any lies necessarily involves an intention : to show what you really want instead of what it really is. If Breuer altered the order in which these pieces of furniture were made is because that order was of crucial importance to him, giving a meaning to his work to transcend its mere production.

SPACE AS MEMBRANE. ALBERT KAHN AND MIES VAN DER ROHE

Luis Pancorbo Crespo, Inés Martín Robles

The industrial work of Albert Kahn has deeply influenced the Modern Movement European architects. This involuntary influence (it is well known the disregard of Albert Kahn modern architecture) has been minimized, overlooked or simply unknown to most of the architectural critics.

After arriving at Chicago in 1937, Mies van der Rohe finds in the industrial architecture of Albert Kahn (through the monographic book about Kahn published in 1939 by George Nelson), a huge coincidence with the theoretical postulates that he brought from Europe. This creates a profound influence on Mies American buildings based on long-span structures. This research detects and documents that influence, particularly evident in buildings such as Crown Hall, this Cantor drive-in restaurant in Indianapolis or Bacardi offices in Cuba. But aims to go beyond mere documentation and intends to analyze the industrial work of Kahn based on the theories of “Space-membrane” of Siegfried Ebeling, of key importance to understand his American architecture, as Neumeier has documented in his book on Mies.

We will use primarily this concept of “Space-membrane” along with other theoretical keys as Semperian tectonics about skin and bones or Rudolf Schwarz's “quiet space”, to define the logic of boundaries as the construction of space in Albert Kahn's industrial work. A reading of Kahn from the standpoint of Mies to help us to rethink from the architectural point of view a little-studied and analyzed work outside the historiographical or merely industrial scope. The analysis of Kahn's work focuses on industrial buildings of great importance in his architectural evolution as the Packard Forge Shop (1911), the River Rouge Glass Production Plant (1922) or war aviation industrial sheds, as Glenn Martin bomber Assembly Plant of 1937, in which the space, the structure and the outer skin are the only elements of an architectural syntax based on the pure construction and on the spatial concept of limit as a threshold or membrane

AN INVENTORY OF MODERNITY. NUEVA FORMA AND THE HISTORIOGRAPHY OF MODERN SPANISH ARCHITECTURE

Javier Martínez González

Juan Daniel Fullaondo was editor of *Nueva Forma* between 1967 and 1975. During this period, he tackled a very relevant inventory task: he brought to light a number of Spanish architects of the first half of the twentieth century, whose work had gone mostly unnoticed or very selectively collected by previous historiography. As a consequence of this historiographic ‘rescue operation’, certain established points regarding the genesis and early development of modern Spanish architecture were put into question.

Fullaondo stated that the Spanish architectural scene was actually less linear and univocal than thought. Previous surveys had applied a priori scheme to reality. Although it provided an apparently clear and intelligible story, it was however far from the way facts had taken place.

Fullaondo's approach called into question points raised by the previous stories, including several of those composing Oriol Bohigas' interpretative frame. Thus, the stellar role it had granted to GATEPAC was minimized by Fullaondo, who considered it only a local interpreter of international rationalism, primarily attentive to the corbusieran slogans. In his opinion, considering the complexity of the Spanish architectural scene was the only way to succeed with the interpretive work of figures of an unorthodox modernity, and discover that it was precisely in their heterodoxy, in their ‘impurity’ where reached their true value and their highest poetic heights.

Furthermore, Fullaondo discovered an expressionist constant or ‘aeon’ that ran through much of the Spanish architecture of the first half of the twentieth century. This discovery would allow him to shed new light on the trajectory of architects as Fernando García Mercadal or Luis Gutiérrez Soto, as well as to add value to buildings that, as the Capitol building, had occupied a discrete role in the previous stories of Spanish architecture.

Finally, the Fullaondo's rescue operation also reached the 40s decade. Regardless of the achievements of its embodiments, the study of this period should not be overlooked -as some historians have done-, as it was located at a crucial moment in the recent history of Spanish architecture.

ABSTRACTION AND BOREDOM: SEEING THE INVISIBLE OR NOT SEEING IT

José Manuel Pozo

Architecture and contemporary art have based their progress with the acceptance of abstraction as a goal and practical creative mean. The architectural shapes it generated have been widely refused, lacking ornament and decoration, composed of abstract and bold geometries, considered scarcely human. The text stands for the

superior value of abstraction above the lay practice of perfection aiming at mimicking nature; and above all, poises abstraction as a more humane intervention than pure mimicry, given the specific use of reason, the most humane of mankind's qualities, according to its particular nature within Nature.

ARCHITECTURE EXHIBITIONS AND EXHIBITING ARCHITECTURE: A FOCUS EXERCISE

Héctor García-Diego, Beatriz Caballero Zubía

The twentieth century can be regarded as the golden age of architecture exhibitions. The special vicissitudes that have turned these hundred years into one of the most turbulent periods in the history of the discipline provided a fertile ground for the growth, development and success of the exhibitions. To the extent that it is impossible to separate the exhibition phenomenon from the deep process of transformation experienced by the architecture over the last century. And so, regardless to what one would consider, the exhibition appointments were not limited to gather the most relevant events of the period, but were made by themselves as relevant as any of the selected contents to be displayed.

Therefore it is considered that the study of exhibitions, defined as a relevant phenomenon for architecture, may help to understand some of the key elements of the history of the discipline in the previous period. On one hand, the contents accounted milestones or border moments with the capacity to deeply transform the course of architecture, in many cases permanently. On the other hand, large contests involved extraordinary opportunities for direct creative experimentation with the buildings that had to house selected pieces, although the resulting architectures were contaminated by the very specific characteristics of the samples.

In this context, the article focuses on the revealing and paradoxical relationship between container and content. To that end, given their unavoidable interdependence, a method of study based on an exercise of dual approach is proposed. This approach allows us to study the phenomenon in both ways, exploring each one of the parts without losing sight of the relationship between them. This method has been carried out by the School of Architecture of the University of Navarra for the last two years. Thus, architectural exhibitions and architecture of exhibitions, were analysed by an ambitious initiative consisting of various actions and culminating in the IX International Congress of the History of Spanish Modern Architecture. Some of the results of this ambitious research project are reflected in this article.

2014 JAVIER CARVAJAL AWARD: MARIO BOTTA THREE STAGES WITHIN A CAREER

Esteve Bonell

It is both a pleasure and a honour to be at Pamplona Architecture School to say a few words about the persona of architect and friend Mario Botta. I would not want to start my presentation with a list of the great number of achievements within his endless curriculum. Neither would it be advisable within my few words to account for the importance, richness, and complexity of his architectural and academic work. You can find more precise and comprehensive information with a quick browse on the web through your mobile phones. I would however like to highlight some passages; fortunate moments that follow along his career.

1. First stage: the beginnings, the 60s

If we teach what we know, and know what we have learned, Mario Botta was lucky enough or had the ability to be able to follow the advice from three great masters of world architecture: Le Corbusier, Louis Kahn, Carlo Scarpa...

He was trained in the respect for Le Corbusier and learned about the vitality and boldness of his stance in 1965, while collaborating with the master's last project: the Hospital for Venice. He also relied on Louis Kahn's acknowledgement of history and powerful geometries while working on the Lido Congress Center. He was also able to follow the advice of Carlo Scarpa, his diploma project mentor. From him he inherited the pleasure of detailing and the perfection of finishings. Undoubtedly young Mario Botta had a privileged beginning, surrounded by these great architects. Undoubtedly, Le Corbusier, Louis Kahn and Carlo Scarpa had great influence on the development of his career.

2. Second stage: the 70s

Since the seventies, when he reached the zenith of Ticino architecture, together with Aurelio Galfetti, Luigi Snozzi, Livio Vacchini...

A group of architects whose mutual respect and friendship allowed them to cooperate among them in spite of their distinct yet complementary architectures. The whole body of their work has not only strengthen Swiss culture, but has been a reference point for European and world architecture for over 40 years.

3. Third stage: the 90s

Creation and planning of one of the most appealing architecture schools: the Accademia di Architettura di Mendrisio. You will agree with me that creating a new School is not only a matter of ambition and enthusiasm, but a cultural effort that goes beyond architecture becoming a service to society. Let me provide my personal testimony of what the Accademia di Mendrisio is. In 1995, Mario Botta talked to me for the first time about the School he was organizing and the possibility that I became professor in it. At that time I was engaged with the school in Lausanne so I could not take part of it. Two years later, when the School was already running under Aurelio Galfetti's chair, they ask again and I committed for one year, which ended up spanning until I retired on May 10, 2012, on my 70th birthday. I must admit that collaborating with the development of these new School for almost 14 years was an outstanding experience. Despite how demanding it is to teach in Switzerland, it was easy to work, aided by young assistants, directing a design workshop for a small number of students. Few students and large means, one of the key factors for the Accademia's success. At the beginning, hosted in the facilities of the old hospital of Mendrisio, at Turconi, and since 2000 at the modern Canavée building. I feel privileged to have taught there. And, above all, be in touch with other professors, acclaimed architects. Not only Mario and Aurelio Galfetti but Peter Zumthor, Marc Collomb, Alfredo Pini, Panos Koulermos; or historians and humanists such as Kenneth Frampton, Joseph Rykwert, Ignasi de Solà-Morales, Jacques Gubler, Leonardo Benevolo, or Massimo Cacciari.

During those first years, Luigi Snozzi and Livio Vacchini contributed with their interesting and always sharp remarks. Later on, as the school grew bigger, Valerio Olgiati, Valentin Bearth, Manuel and Francisco Aires Mateus, Quintus Miller, Jonathan Sergison, and Christian Sumi-Marianne Burkhalter also joined in, as well as many others that form a number of different countries and cultures, we arrived hoping to strengthen the school's operation, transmit our experiences and learn everything that floated at the Accademia's atmosphere. Transmit and learn, those are the foundations of education and the *raison d'être* of any school.

All that due to Mario Botta's effort and persuasion, aided by Aurelio Galfetti, its first headmaster for 10 years. As Mario Botta said informally, that's how a school that wanted to train "architects like us" (*architetti come noi*) was built; architects that finished their studies being able to think, draw, and control the construction process of a building.

And I want to stress this point since, at least in our country, this process is being questioned. Such a threat is poised by the preliminary draft of the law for professional services outlined by the Department of Economy. The architect's role is losing its influence and its operational field is constantly being diminished. It is obvious that building the city is a collective task, through the contribution of a number of different professionals; engineers, sociologists, economists, lawyers, and many others. But above all it is due to the work, responsibility, and synthesis capability that architects have that the quality of the built work is achieved.

On the other hand, it is convenient to highlight the cultural character that has always identified good architecture and that should continue in the future with professionals that have synthesis capability and a humanist approach: able to understand the relation between a building and its surroundings, where the composition ability meets the constructive means; where these are as valuable as the territory culture; where plastic imagination, favoured by the world of ideas goes hand in hand with the craft of doing things well done; without forgetting the knowledge of history and, naturally, the ever increasingly demanding environmental requirements.

Mario Botta recently wrote an article about the "Need for a general architect" as the basis for the education at Accademia de Mendrisio. In spite of the apparent contradiction and anachronism, the Accademia aims at defending the principles of the Modern Movement regarding the capability of the architect to encapsulate knowledge. Just like Muthesius argued architecture should be practised, "From the spoon to the City" or remembering Mies van der Rohe or Carlo Scarpa's statements arguing that "God is in the details". This implies the need to protect the general knowledge of the

architectural process following the project's different scales to maintain its unity from the preliminary ideas towards the final results.

Mario Botta ends his essay with these words: "the need for a poetic role strengthens the general architect, the only one able to confront the most cunning paradoxes of today's world, where the process of technical modernization leads to social deterioration. Resilience to specialization of knowledge is justified as an alternative to the wild globalisation ruling the contemporary cultural experience of today's mankind. When the Accademia originated almost 20 years ago in Mendrisio, this considerations where barely intuitions of scenarios that have grown exponentially in the last 10 years. To talk about the general architect today proofs that the intellectual, educational, and professional ideas proposed then found today its historical *raison d'être*".

To conclude, I would like to stress that today the Javier Carvajal Award is granted to a great architecture master, committed to the craft, with education, and undoubtedly, committed to the society of our time.

Thank you Mario for your generosity and optimism.

Congratulations.

ARCHITECTURE AND MEMORY

Mario Botta

The text reproduces the first part of the lecture the author gave on the occasion of the 2014 Javier Carvajal Award ceremony. The lecture was profusely illustrated by dozens of images, so all of them have been included first as a visual panorama parallel to the text, where they are only cited by a number.

Botta argues that Architecture and Memory are two terms that configure space and time, both of them linked to the work of architects and pursuit of building the space for human life.